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GENERAL

1. Comment on Pravda's reply to President Eisenhower's address:

Pravda's reply to the President's 16 April speech on the international situation constitutes an effort to regain the initiative in the "peace offensive" through a strong appeal to world opinion. The appeal is couched in terms intended to demonstrate the consistent rectitude of Soviet foreign policy during the postwar years and to blame the continued unsolved international issues on the United States. This "peace offensive," as elaborated in Pravda, differs from those periodically conducted in the past by the Soviet Government only in its more comprehensive character.

Pravda's treatment of the major cold war issues suggests little inclination to compromise. The editorial indeed rejects the concept that there has been a "termination of a certain era in Soviet policy" and particularly in Soviet foreign policy, "the correctness of which has been proved by the entire course of international development." Having thus, by implication at least, cast aside the possibility of a major change in Soviet foreign policy, Pravda suggests that it is more appropriate to speak of the "end of an era" in American policy. Thus it is inferred that the United States rather than the USSR should compromise on international issues.

Pravda concludes by reiterating the Kremlin's ostensible willingness to discuss international issues: the USSR, unlike President Eisenhower, does not set up a series of preliminary conditions, but would welcome "any step by the US Government or the government of any other country... directed toward a friendly settlement of contentious questions... by direct negotiations and when necessary, within the framework of the United Nations."

Thus, having set forth its position in general terms, the Kremlin attempts to call on the United States to make specific proposals and to take the next concrete step toward discussions.

SOVIET UNION

2. Moscow Embassy reports no indications of Satellite foreign policy conference.

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The American Embassy has no information confirming a reported Satellite foreign policy conference in Moscow. An Embassy officer staying at the hotel which usually lodges foreign delegations reports that it was practically empty between 12 and 18 April, when the conference was reportedly held. Ambassador Bohlen believes that a more likely occasion would be the period of the May Day celebrations in Moscow.

Comment: The US Legation in Budapest was recently informed by Yugoslav and British diplomats that a Satellite foreign policy conference was held in Moscow between 12 and 18 April. No other information corroborating the Legation's report has been received.

FAR EAST

3. MIG-15 from East China attacks US Navy plane:

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was reported.

A MIG-15 attacked a US naval patrol bomber on 22 April about 75 miles northeast of Shanghai over the Yellow Sea, according to a Navy report. Three firing passes were made without warning, but no damage or injury

Comment: In March a combat-trained MIG-15 jet fighter regiment of about 37 aircraft was moved from Manchuria to Shanghai. Since that time, antiaircraft artillery exercises at Shanghai and an increase in the number of defense installations along the coast have been noted.

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SOUTHEAST ASIA

4. British take pessimistic view of Laos situation:

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A British Foreign Office memorandum to Prime Minister Churchill on the worsening situation in Laos notes that French weaknesses there are both military and political. The French

lack an offensive spirit and are handicapped by insufficient troops and inadequate backing from Paris. Politically, the local distrust of French motives and dissatisfaction with the present degree of autonomy result in low morale and a tendency to regard the hostilities as a French struggle.

The US Embassy in London adds that the memorandum makes no reference to the seeming ineptness of French strategy or to a report from the British mission in Saigon on a recent unsuccessful operation in Annam involving 13 battalions which were badly needed elsewhere.

Comment: There is little doubt that French defensive thinking has often prevented exploitation of Viet Minh vulnerability to rear area attacks. The French strategy of static defense can lead only to the further isolation of the French forces in a few fortified positions, with increasingly difficult supply problems, and virtually invites the unhampered Viet Minh occupation of large territories.

5. Laos fears Viet Minh may be joined by sympathizers from Thailand:

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The Laotian Foreign Minister has asked for American support for French and Laotian requests to the Thai Government to move the Vietnamese population of that country

away from the Laotian border. He states that Thailand reversed its original agreement-in-principle to this action because of protests from the Vietnamese Ambassador in Bangkok and resistance from the governors of the Thai border provinces. The Laotian Government, he asserts, is convinced that if the Viet Minh reach the Mekong River, many inhabitants of these provinces will cross the border and join the attackers.

Comment: The Thai Government has indicated that it is considering additional security measures along the border. The American Ambassador in Bangkok points out that the removal of some 50,000 persons who are generally sympathetic to the Viet Minh cause is almost physically impossible and might result in a mass uprising.

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